

Paul's Second Missionary Journey Part II

Taking the Gospel to Philippi

(Acts 16:11-40)

Introduction (Acts 16:11-12):

1. Here are some pictures of ancient Philippi



Excavations

Archaeological work has revealed a large and well-preserved forum, a theater, the alleged jail of Paul and several Byzantine churches, including one of the earliest churches known in Greece. The number of churches in the city in the Byzantine period indicate Philippi's importance to Christians at this time. A series of earthquakes apparently destroyed many of the buildings and probably contributed to the city's decline.



Egnatian Way

The Via Egnatia was built beginning in 145 B.C. and at its greatest extent connected Byzantium with the Adriatic ports. This route was Rome's primary artery to the east and Philippi was an important outpost along the road. The Egnatian Way made it easier for Rome to move troops throughout the empire and it was the route that Paul traveled on from Neapolis to Philippi, Amphipolis, Apollonia and Thessalonica

2. The trip from Troas to Philippi:
 - The first stop was Samothrace (an island in the Aegean Sea) about halfway from Troas (from where they left) to the Greek mainland.
 - 1) We have no record of anything happening here and they apparently just stayed the night.
 - 2) From this island the group (Paul, Silas, Timothy, and Luke) will set sail for Macedonia.
 - The next stop was the port city of Neapolis
 - The next stop was Philippi
 - 1) The journey from Neapolis to Philippi was about 10 miles inland. (See map of Paul's Second Missionary Journey)
 - 2) The group would have traveled on the famous Egnatian Road (Via Egnatia) to arrive in Philippi. (See page 256)
3. A little background on Philippi:
 - Philippi was an eastern outpost located on the Roman highway called the Egnatian Way.
 - The city was originally known as Crenides and then renamed Philippi, after Philip of Macedon (who was Alexander the Great's father) conquered it in 168 B.C.
 - Sometime after the Romans conquered the Greeks, Philippi was made into a Roman colony by Caesar Augustus (Octavian) and they enjoyed all of the special privileges of that government.
 - Although Philippi was primarily colonized by Roman soldiers, there was a small Jewish representation there. This is where we will pick up our study....

The Events Surrounding the Conversion of Lydia (Acts 16:13-18)

1. There is no mention of a “synagogue” which would explain why this group of women met outdoors for prayer. (Acts 16:13)
 - Several commentaries that I have read state that the rules for forming a synagogue required 10 Jewish males.
 - I do applaud these women for still pursuing God whether there was a formal meeting place or not.
 - Apparently they met out in the open and Luke tells us it was along side a river, which was probably the Gangites River (approx. 1.5 miles west of Philippi).
 - It was at this prayer meeting that Paul begins to speak and we can only assume he told them of the Good News of Jesus Christ.

2. Lydia – **The first recorded European convert** (Acts 16:14-15)
 - A little background on Lydia:
 - 1) She was from the city of _____ which was back across the Aegean Sea located in the Anatolia plains of what was then known as Asia Minor (now known as the country of Turkey). This city is also mentioned as one of the seven churches of Asia in Revelation 2:18-29)
 - 2) She was a _____, as we are told she sold purple fabrics. It is highly probable that she was wealthy; for the purple dye (from either the murex shellfish or the root of the madder plant) was expensive and used in the making of royal garments.
 - 3) We are also told she was a _____ of God, a term generally used for Gentiles (Acts 10:2, 17:4, 17:17) which probably means she was not Jewish.

- In what way was Lydia’s heart prepared to hear the words of Paul?
 - 1) By the fact that she was already _____ to God by actively worshipping Him, shows that the Lord was drawing her to Himself. This is called _____ in God.
 - 2) The second thing that we see is she was _____ to what Paul was saying. This is called _____ in God.
 - 3) The third thing that we see is she _____ to what Paul said. This is called _____ in God.

 - Theses three things mentioned above reveal the assurance of Lydia’s salvation. She goes on to evidence her transformed life in three ways (Acts 16:15):
 - 1) She is _____
 - 2) She is a _____ to her family
 - 3) She shows _____ (See Romans 12:13, Hebrews 13:2, I Peter 4:9, I Timothy 5:9-10, John 13:35)
3. Facing opposition from the enemy (Acts 16:16-18)
- Paul is confronted by someone identified as a “slave girl” (enslaved woman).
 - 1) This “slave girl” was being exploited (for profit) by others (probably a group of men) for her ability to predict the future.
 - 2) She was more or less a fortune teller (sort of like our modern day palm readers etc.) and her “**alleged**” powers to predict the future came from the demon/demons that possessed her.

- This slave girl was following after Paul and the missionary team saying; “These men are bond servants of the Most High God, who are proclaiming to you the way of salvation”.
 - 1) Were her words true?
 - 2) Is it possible for Satan and demons to speak words of truth? (See II Corinthians 11:13-14)
 - 3) Is there any significance to the slave girl using the words; “Most High God”?
 - 4) Do the spiritual forces of darkness (Satan and the demons) believe in the power of Almighty God? (James 2:19, Luke 8:26-39)

 - Why did Paul cast the demon out of her? (Acts 16:18)

 - Why did the demon obey Paul and come out of her?

 - I like what John MacArthur says; “These two women (Lydia and the slave girl) typify all of humanity. Everyone is either liberated by Jesus Christ or enslaved by Satan. (Commentary on Acts pg 97)
4. It is because of Paul’s actions, (the casting of the demon from the slave girl), that will get he and Silas thrown in prison where he will meet the Philippian jailer and also lead him to faith in Christ.

The Events Surrounding the Conversion of the Philippian Jailer (Acts 16:19-40)

1. Paul and Silas face unjust persecution (Acts 16:19-24)
 - What was the primary reason that Paul and Silas were arrested (seized) and taken before the Roman authorities? (Acts 16:19)
 - 1) Is it possible that this was another attempt by Satan to stop the Gospel from spreading to the Gentiles?
 - 2) Is it possible that in spite of this unjust persecution that God would use this circumstance for good?
 - We are told that they were brought before the “chief magistrates” and there were generally two in each Roman colony. The role of the magistrates was to keep peace, decide or judge cases of wrong doing, administer appropriate punishment, and basically govern the affairs of the city. (Acts 16:20)
 - 1) The charge against Paul and Silas was “*technically true*” in that there was a law that did not permit Roman citizens to practice or promote any other “foreign” religion without the permission/sanction of the Roman government. In much the same ways we have plenty of laws that are not enforced – one could conclude this law was rarely enforced as well. None the less; out of convenience for the accusers, it was now considered an important matter.
 - 2) The charge of “mass confusion” however, was never proven true for it had no basis. The real issue was the loss of profits to those exploiting the slave girl.

- The mob (in the market place) grows impatient and forces the magistrates to take action that was not consistent with Roman law. (Acts 16:22-23)
 - 1) Within the Roman Empire there was a growing sense of animosity towards the Jews (see as an example - Acts 18:2). History has witnessed these sorts of “anti-Semitic” sentiments throughout various stages of development and they seem to be evidenced here in Philippi.
 - 2) The fact that Paul and Silas were selected for punishment “seems” to support the idea that the slave girls owners were more prejudiced against them (perhaps because they were both Jews and Christians) and not Timothy (1/2 Gentile) and Luke (A probable Gentile).
 - 3) Within the Roman judicial system they didn’t seem to differentiate between Judaism and Christianity (See Acts 18:14-15) so the easiest way to solve this dilemma (the charge of promoting “other religions”) was to beat them and throw them into prison.
 - 4) If the magistrates would have thoroughly investigated the charges and quizzed Paul further they would have found he was a Roman citizen and at the minimum; he should have had a public trial. Further, flogging was not supposed to be performed on a Roman citizen – at least not on someone who was not “officially” guilty.
 - 5) It does seem odd that Paul does not declare his Roman citizenship here in this case as he does in Acts 22:25-30, but whatever the case it all works out for good.
- All of this persecution and suffering results in Paul being in a position to share the Gospel with the Philippian jailer. This is a good reminder that suffering does not always have to be looked at as bad.

2. I would imagine that being thrown in jail was not what Paul had planned; but, he and Silas make the best of it. (Acts 16:25)
 - Instead of complaining about their circumstances; what do Paul and Silas do?

 - What impact does this have on the other in the jail?

3. Take note of several things that occur in response to the jailing of Paul and Silas (Acts 16:26-30)
 - What does God do? (Acts 16:26)

 - What was the initial response of the jailer? Why did he respond that way?

 - What was Paul's response to the jailer's actions?

 - What does the jailer do next (Acts 16:30)? What would have caused him to respond this way?

4. The simplicity of the Gospel and its life changing impact (Acts 16:31-34)

- The answer to the all important question; “What must I do to be saved”, or “How can I be born again”; is summed up in the response by Paul and Silas. (Acts 16:31)
 - 1) What was their response to the jailers’ question?
 - 2) Was this enough to save the jailer?

- Not only did the jailer believe, but apparently so did the other members of his household. (Acts 16:33-34)
 - 1) The only thing needed for a person to be justified before God is _____ in Christ.
 - 2) However, once this declaration of faith is made then a transformation occurs. This transformation will evidence itself through a natural desire to be obedient to the Lord and to follow Him. At the same time the Holy Spirit is given as a seal of our redemption. (II Corinthians 5:17, Romans 6:3-4, Romans 6:6-14, Galatians 2:20, Titus 3:5, Ephesians 1:13-14, Ephesians 4:17-24)
 - 3) What were some of the evidences of their (the jailer and his family) belief?

5. Paul and Silas are delivered (Acts 16:35-40)
- At some point the jailer must have returned Paul and Silas to prison because the magistrates decided to have them released.
 - We are not told why the magistrates changed their minds to release Paul and Silas, but we could make some reasonable conclusions.....do you have any suggestions?
 - Why did Paul demand that the magistrates escort them out of jail?
 - 1) It would seemingly be out of character for Paul to do this for some sort of payback or vindictive purpose.
 - 2) Most conclude that his reasons were honorable and in so doing it might spare any future harassment of missionaries who come to the region preaching the truth claims about Christ.
 - 3) The magistrates were clearly in error (**and they knew it**) for inflicting corporal punishment on a Roman citizen, and even worse on one who had not received a public trial.
 - 4) It is highly probable that Paul's requirement that the magistrates show them the respect they were due (as Roman citizens), will provide an opportunity for this new formed church in Philippi to be protected by the authorities as opposed to being persecuted by them.
 - 5) Isn't it great to see how God can take circumstances that are meant for harm and turn them for the good – what do you say?

Closing Comments:

1. Was this trip to Philippi worth it?
 - It showed us that sometimes our plans (though well intended) are not what God has planned for us. If we will listened to God (as Paul did when he received the vision to go to Macedonia), and follow His leading (even when we don't fully understand it), then we will know we are doing His will.
 - 1) In some instances there will be showers of blessings that will be evidenced in this life (i.e. the conversion of Lydia and the jailer).
 - 2) In other instances there may be pain and suffering but even that will be worth it when we are with the Lord forever.
 - Paul will later pen a letter to the Philippians (while in prison) and he will say these things to them:
 - 1) “I give thanks to my God upon all the remembrance of you, always, in every supplication of mine for you all, with joy making the supplication for your contribution to the good news from the first day till now, having been confident in this very thing, that He who began in you a good work, will perform it til the day of Jesus Christ” (Philippians 1:3)
 - 2) “I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish, so that I may gain Christ” (Philippians 3:8)
2. We (along with those in Philippi – especially Lydia and the jailer) should be forever grateful for Paul's willingness to be obedient to God's call in spreading the gospel to the continent of Europe!